

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE 6 July 1988
TO: Mr. John Despres, SSCI		
ROOM NO. 211	BUILDING Senate Hart Ofc Bldg.	
REMARKS:		

The attached was hand-carried by
 to SSCI on ^{STAT}
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Perceptions of the 19th Party Conference

Reporting of Western journalists and diplomats covering the 19th Party Conference, as well as the Soviet media, reflect contradictory reactions to the Conference and its resolutions. Most Soviet citizens, conditioned by the soporific speeches of generations of leaders, seemed generally startled by the frankness of the debate. Many seem generally proud of General Secretary Gorbachev management of the debate, and his forceful intervention Thursday to focus the debate on political reform.

The strongest supporters of the conference agenda are probably the "generation of 1956"--officials and intellectuals who came to maturity in the Khrushchev period of de-Stalinization, and the generation of party officials, economic managers, and intellectuals stymied by Brezhnev's period of "stagnation." Those that reached maturity during the Second World War generally have a more benign view of Stalin and the Soviet past. [REDACTED] note that many Soviets in their twenties and thirties are motivated by materialistic not ideological considerations, and are ambivalent about Gorbachev's agenda.

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The General's Secretary's program probably generated--at least in the short run--significant support among the non-party majority. The Resolution on political reform clearly is aimed at involving the the non-party masses, and reducing the gap between the party and the people. Gorbachev's promise of greater official religious tolerance certainly will broaden the base of his support among believers especially in the Slavic regions. The broad coverage of environmental subjects at the Conference almost certainly played well in the Russian and non-Russian republics, where there is a popular consensus that national and regional officials have recklessly endangered the health of the population.

[REDACTED] suggest that the key elites view the conference differently.

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Party Apparatus. The party bureaucracy is seen by many foreign commentators as the short- and possibly the long-term losers. Proposals to reduce the authority of the Central Committee staff strike at the heart of the party apparat, and resolution mandating the delegation of power to the Soviets, and limiting service in party posts to 10 years are seen by them as an effort to reduce the bureaucratic power of the party. While Gorbachev defended the Communist Party's political monopoly in his final speech, it is clear that he wants to redefine the party's role in a way that threatens the interests of the traditional party bosses.

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Conservative defenders of the nomenklatura class did not roll over and play dead at the Conference. Former Moscow First Secretary Yel'tsin, a severe critic of the nomenklatura, was rebutted not only by "Second Secretary" Ligachev but by Gorbachev. Ligachev's speech was particularly well received by aparatchiki in the audience.

Nevertheless, the fact that Gorbachev won approval from the Conference for these political reforms suggests that the party apparatus is far from monolithic. Some regional party leaders undoubtedly welcome the effort to decentralize decisionmaking, and are willing to be held accountable in exchange.

Economic managers. Soviet managers led the attack on the party bureaucracy at the Conference, many of whom have been frustrated by systemic impediments to innovations. The theme "bureaucracy is our greatest enemy" was repeated by a number of managers, one of whom sarcastically suggested that inefficient ministry officials should be shot, or "be put to catching mice". They almost certainly see elimination of the economic departments of the Central Committee, and the reduction in size of the economic ministries proposed in the Conference resolutions as major victories.

Some managers, however, schooled in the Stalinist-Brezhnevite model, clearly fear Gorbachev's reforms, and do not want to operate in a competitive environment. These officials have been generally mute on the question of the relationship with the ministries, but will weigh in at a later date as the issue is debated more specifically.

Intelligentsia. The liberal intelligentsia, which for the most part has supported Gorbachev's reform agenda and his commitment to investigate the Soviet past, welcomed the outcome of the Conference. The intelligentsia reportedly welcomed as well the resolution on glasnost and the decision to erect a monument to Stalin's victims. Nevertheless, the intelligentsia is probably ambivalent about the success of systemic reform, seeing Ligachev's savaging of former Moscow Party boss Yel'tsin --and Gorbachev's failure to defend him--as evidence that socialist pluralism has proscribed limits.

Dissidents such as Andrei Sakharov, while supporting Gorbachev, remain concerned that the Conference and its resolutions fail to address sensitive human rights issues, such as the existence of political prisoners and the situation in Armenia. The absence of any criticism of the KGB almost certainly bothered both the dissidents and liberal intelligentsia, who hoped that the Conference would deal more concretely with law reform and the role of the security organs and the procuracy.

Military and the KGB. The security forces maintained a low profile during the Conference, though military representation was

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normal. General Gromov, the commander of Soviet forces in Afghanistan, was the only military leader to speak, defending the decision to withdraw in Afghanistan.

No KGB representative spoke, but the text of a Soviet press article drafted by KGB staffers immediately prior to the Conference reflected only lukewarm support of Gorbachev's political agenda. We believe the heavy emphasis on legal reforms in the speeches of the Conference was not to the security services' liking.

Non-Russian Nationalities. The effect of the Conference on the non-Russian nationalities is ambiguous.

- The Conference resolution promised greater political, economic, and cultural autonomy to non-Russians, which several speakers implicitly demanded, almost certainly were applauded by non-Russian elites. Gorbachev may also have gained credibility in non-Russian regions by permitting long-silenced intellectuals like the Ukrainian writer Oleynik to speak.
- The Conference resolutions failed, however, to address issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, a region disputed by Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Conference also refused to consider legalizing independent political associations now operating openly in the Baltic, or the question of the Baltic republics' economic autonomy.

Opposition to Moscow's policies in the Baltic and Armenia have not been dampened by the Conference. Street demonstrations in Estonia and riots in Armenia are evidence that the Conference may in some regions actually have intensified nationalist sentiments. The summer in the Caucasus and the Baltic may be a particularly hot one for Moscow.